ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION

A method and apparatus is provided that classifies a seat occupant into one of several different weight classes based on an estimated value of the seat occupant weight. An occupant's measured weight varies when the occupant's seating position changes or when the vehicle travels over adverse road conditions. A plurality of weight sensors are used to measure the weight exerted by a seat occupant against a seat bottom and are used to determine center of gravity for the seat occupant. A seat belt force sensor is also used to assist in classifying the seat occupant. Compensation factors using the seat belt force and center of gravity information are used to generate an estimated weight value. The estimated value of the occupant weight is compared to a series of upper and lower weight thresholds assigned to each of the weight classes to generate an occupant weight sample class. Over a period of time, several estimated weight values are compared to the weight class thresholds. Once a predetermined number of consistent and consecutive occupant weight sample classes is achieved, the occupant is locked into a specific occupant weight class. When the weight class is locked, the separation value between the upper and lower thresholds is increased to account for minor weight variations due to adverse road conditions and changes in occupant position.

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